INTERVIEW WITH MS. RUTH THORN

Conducted by:

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and

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Now Mrs. Thorn, I wonder if you would give us your full name for our record and tell us how long you've lived in the Valley.

Yes, my name is Ruth Corbit Nelsher Thorn, I was born in Van Nuys in 1914, one of the first babies to be delivered by a doctor, Van Nuys sanitarium.

Can you give us the name of the doctor?

Dr. Patten, he worked with a Miss Hiens, the one below Van Nuys sanitarium, which was I found out very recently. I always thought it had been on Friar St. off what is now Van Nuys Boulevard. I found the other day somebody who would know that it was on Sylvan St. So it must be where the courthouse is now.

Can you tell us anything about Dr. Patten. How long has he been gone?

Oh, I don't think he stayed there very long. I don't know why, but it seemed to me that he went to private practice elsewhere. This is what I understand. Of course, I didn't know him. I was a little bit too young to be interested at the time. What was interesting was how my mother happened through in Van Nuys sanitarium. My father had come to California in 1902. He was known as one of best landscape leaders on the west coast. He came with insistence and assistance of an uncle who lived here who was a contractor in Hollywood, when movies were starting up. "I believe there's room for brilliant young artists out here in painting the sets and so fourth," said my uncle. So my father came out,

That is what caused him to come out?

Yes, this is what caused him to come out. He came to California in 1902 from Philadelphia. He stayed in Hollywood with a young folk for awhile and he did that work for awhile.
Then he was sort of a fine gangly young man, and even then the movies didn't appeal to him very much the crowd.

What type of person shall we say he was at that time?

I really don't know the situation. So he lived in Laurel Cyn. for a time where he raised some chickens and he was very poor, but he had a beautiful home and painted a little oil sketch and go and ask the person if they wanted to buy this picture, and they did. That's how he sustained himself that way. Laurel Cyn was of course at that time was just a little cow cart

trail through the brush. I don't even know if they called it Laurel Cyn. It was a dent in the outburst of Hollywood. Then somehow he came to the attention of a long friend in Hollywood. He was approach by Paul Delonpray. Delonpray was an artist and he gave us these great big . . ; studio for awhile. While he was there he met a person named Gable, Mr. Gable. The Gables were one of the first people who ever came to Topanga Cyn. He went on the invitation of their sons, and he went walking one morning. They had a homestead. They went to another portion of the Canyon across the Valley. He said, "Oh, this land is beautiful, how do you get it?.

(The reply was:) Hey, look, we happen to know similar place in Topanga that is available to the government. That's how he got the homestead. I was trying to think who was the president then. He still had those papers he was very proud who signed them. I think it was President Wilson. Now when my father died 1957. He had the honor of being a person who lived the longest on a original homestead in California. I believe it was 56 years.

Was your mother married at the time she came out?

No, she was a career woman. She had original assignment with A's of Overall Boys in the 1900. They were used in advertising and everything you can think of. A person at a company who a sister an integrator Miss Grovert. Miss Grovert wrote a book geared to little people, before that they only had guppy readers and so forth. I learned this not long ago, and I found this very interesting. What she did was say . . . well I'm not positive about this number but will say 300 words and use them over and over in sentences. They read little more freely then Dick, Jane and Spot. thought that we have now, but it was the same idea were reputation. She was the first one to do it. Then now who was going to illustrate this book? So they got a hold of my mother and they called this book "The Son Bonnet Baby Premier" and I have one of the first copies; and it was used in public schools 1905 -1915. My brothers and sisters learned to read from it. Incidentally, I heard by the staurion how to read. . . .

This book your talking about is very interesting, Mrs. Thom, that you brought us to see "The Son Bonnet Baby Premier", and I see its copyright is 1902. Can you tell us something of your early education in the valley or do you wish to tell more about your mother?

Now, I have to go on about her a little bit because I guess without her I wouldn't be here. Would I? So she came to California as a entertainer for the Santa Fe Railroad with Carry Jakers Tom. Now, it seems that the Santa Fe has in those years which was 1908. They used to have their excuetives not just the skeletons who just worked on the practice and so forth went way out in the sticks some place like down Raftin Pass and down through Texas or New Mexico.

I know Raftin Pass. I don't know that the Santa Fe goes through Texas, New Mexico and so forth.

They would send entertainment to the south to entertain these people. Carry Jakers Tom, a great song writer approached her and said: "Would you go?" Now, my mother's practice at that time was shop-talk. A shop-talk . . . you might not know. A lot of the younger people do not know what I'm speaking of when I say a shop-talk. A shop-talk is when you take a large sheet of blank newspaper and you put on white gloves and you use pastel chalk. You draw in various lines and so forth . . . a pictures of subjects. You talk about them as you are drawing them. For instance, If she was doing this at a woman's club she would quickly sketch a picture of one of these Son Bonnett Baby Suits, faces one you never saw, there yellowish dress apron, and the child would be carrying a huge bouquet. She'd say,"Oh, we're so delighted to be invited here today." So you'd bring this bouquet to Mrs. Johnson. your president and so forth. That's what's a shop-talk. And I don't know all the subjects she used.

Just the other day, the most interesting thing my mother kept was a diary. The time she left Chicago and came to California, and returned to Chicago, that was a six month situation. It was fascinating. Someday I'll write a book about it with it.

So she came and decided she loved California. So she returned in 1910. She was here six months, She stood under a oak tree and got married and lived under government homestead that she never seen in her life. Now this homestead is you drive now though Topanga Cyn. You'll see about you . . .from the valley to the summit of the canyon about half way down to the ocean . . . half way through the canyon. On the right hand side of the street there's a stucco building which used to be a grammar school. That's incidently the school I graduated from. Now it's the American Legion home, I think. You look straight up back from . . ; We used to call it "gobblers knob". There's a house sitting up there that wasn't ours. But down behind it and that's where our homestead was. So at that time as I understand readings from the memories of my mother it approached Topanga Cyn from up the coast from Santa Monica. There's all Japanese gardens along under the Palacades there. About where Will Rogers lighthouse is there was a long hill were big ships used to come in. As the man came to the main entrance to Topanga Cyn. of course, it was all dirt road. I mean for horses, buggies and other things.

Well I guess there were a few cars in Santa Monica and maybe a few at Ownsmouth?

No, Owensmouth wasn't there at the time, cause this was 1910. My parents built a road from the ranch called Roseman Rancho from a place in France. They called it Roseman Rancho because a lot of wild roses grew around the spring. It came down

to what is now Topanga Canyon Boulevard which was a dirt road until ... I think ...about 1918, when they redid the road and put some blacktop or whatever it was. I remember when I was five or six years old in the heat of the day in hot summers the tar of the road would bubble. This bubbled up --it was terrific. You take a stick and pick it up on the bubbles and shoot it . . .
I remember when I was about four or five when it happened and about half way between where we turn off the ranch and Topanga post office, a matter of a half mile between there. There was a big flat meadow with a sycamore tree. There the road camp was. That was, they used to have a county jail. I guess County jail prisoners worked on the road. They were in their striped uniforms with a number, as I recall the thing. I remember about it was when my sister and I walked down to the post office to get the mail, we stop at the road camp. Jake was the cook. He wore a big white hat. Of course,all the people would be working, but we played with the bloodhounds that were 10 times bigger than we were. I can remember . . . that you look at it . . . a picnic table a barbecue table. you know, the benches on the other side you know when you were youngster. I can remember clamoring up on the seat and when you got up there Jake would make hot coca and the mug would be way up under your chin.I just remember that feeling so very much.

So they had a big road opening in 1918. My mother and father took four. big wash tubs of flowers down to put at either end of the corners speakers platform. I don't remember what speakers or anything like that, but the flowers were red, white and blue. The canyon and all in bloom with the blue and the Indian paint brush and the white we called it "shmeiska" . . . red, white and blue flowers. I think it was than during the war. Right after the World War I or so, I remember another big event they had. The people from the canyon, I mean from Owensmouth. They probably had relatives. . . They had a big celebration at the Topanga, because of the War was over and they have done Red Cross work. People who would come in and so forth. We had safety pins and clothes. I remember the thing that appealed to me the most was a Scotch girl who was nine years old. She wore those scotch kelts and did this dance while her father played the bagpipes. These memories appear as clear if they were yesterday, just as clear. Also clear was the fact that we had a awful lot of pink cake and ice cream. . . terribly sickening.

As the year progressed, let's say 1913, Owensmouth opened and I think it was in March. Now I wasn't there because I wasn't born until 1914. But reading things and hearing my parents talk. Apparently my father painted all the signs opening Owensmouth. I believe at the time and I think there's some posters about it over at the historical museum that they started at the college. About people being brought out free from town for a big barbecue and that type of thing you know to see all this land that was available. That's what he painted on all of these big signs for. One of them used to be on Ventura Blvd. It was three years there. it was a huge big billboard sign . It had a old, old scene a

Castrol scene, cows and little houses in the front, and big California poppies around it and that was to advertise that part. I remember seeing that sign for years on Ventura Blvd. I was thinking: "Gee, my god, he did that. That's pretty, but do something about it. With the kids you can hold it over them.

I remember we were talking about it one day when I got older. . Dad says: " Yeah I remember that day. I was over at Wendy. Gil and me were dying for a cup of coffee and some nice lady came and gave him a cup of coffee and a container of sugar. He put it in there a lot of sugar and he took a big gulp and "Lord it was hot". He said". That's what I remembered about Owensmouth being open.

One of your questions here was what did I think at this point that might of been most important event in Valley History? I really think it would be the agreements on the watering.

Most people would agree with you. That's the answer that we get the most in the valley.

I don't think we would have had a valley of any kind if it hadn't been for that. There would be no civilization any where without water.

No, I guess they had a . . . I don't remember anything about it, but there had been any practical wars over that was going to come though exactly were it came from of all this and that.

The water came in 1913. That would been a year before you were born.

Yea, 1913. So that thing we see when you drive to Bakersfield that big aqueduct that comes down. Somewhere I've seen a picture in a book in the library of all those people in there very old fashion clothes, standing there awhile water comes gushing out.

We've interviewed people who have been there. They told me it was a very exciting event.

Oh, I can imagine it would be. So any way as the years progressed we use to go. My father painted these paintings and sent them off to exhibits and sold a few here and there. My mother, well I guess I'll get back to her in a minute, No I guess I'll get back to her now. I got to put her in the picture some where. My sister was born a year or so after my parents were married on the homestead where the eight of the indians looked like King of the Hill at dawn when all of the earth is in saddle bags. This women's name was Mrs Tolfeia. She was Spanish and Yoke Indian, I think. She and her son Delorius lived in the canyon for years and years, and if they were around now we would really have history. I don't know but they were some of the first settlers. I think they're both gone. . . . there all gone. She came over and

my mother had a substitute and they got along fairly well, except she didn't know a Dr. Boglestyle who had a summer home over beyond our ranch. As the story goes he rode four or five days after my sister was born and he took a look at my mother and said," Birtha, your going to the hospital," Apparently there's been the after birth of it didn't come out something or other she had a little section their. So when she found she was going to have me, three years later she had seen she wouldn't be so permitted, and six weeks before I was born she and my father got little Fugae and started to Los Angles leaving my sister with my mother's sister, Lenona, on the ranch. They got as far a person a lady name Madam Locqoete a French woman who had a lot of land up there in the Canyon, what they gave us. That's the reason why my mother got this homestead. She said to my mother " Don't go to Los Angles I have a dear friend in Van Nuys " Miss Hymer who has a little sanatorium and you go there and you'll be taken care of carefully.

So that where my mother went and that's how I happen to be born in Van Nuys. They took me home in six weeks later.
I can remember when I was 4 or 5 that road part of the time the main road Topanga Cyn. form Ventura Blvd. was a windy dirt road. Than later in 1918 had some tar on it. We drove one of these little carts that had a barrow bottom and a high seat. I'd always sit in the barrow part and my sister got to sit on the seat with the grown ups. I'm tying to think how long it took from the ranch. It must have taken two or three hours to Owensmouth. It was a lot of winy roads. Even until I was in high school and taking a bus from the bottom of the road to the high school. When you came down though what was Girard, what is now Woodland Hills. You came to Topanga Cyn. to Ventura Blvd. You could not go to Ventura Blvd to Sherman Way that was all fields. You had to make a left turn up to what is now Canoga Park used to be Owensmouth Ave. You make a right turn to go down to Owensmouth Ave. til you got to Sherman Way. You find yourself at Crate Station. That's the time when trains were fascinating. They had all the steam and the whistles and the whole bit, you know.

So the Crate Station was at one end of Owensmouth and Dr. Gunders house was at the other end. I don't remember, but say it was a space of six blocks long or something like that. You came back up to Topanga and Ventura and as you go up Ventura Blvd. to now what is Canoga Park, all of that was the Branch Ranger. Was there a half mile of it ?

Maybe half or a little less the portion is still there. There was all the Branch Ranger were raised beautiful, beautiful milk cows. When I was nine years old open-mouth disease came to California. No one was allowed in the canyon. My father can come back and fourth as a sign painter, they had so many stations at the end of the Topanga Cyn. as you go up there was a great big tree that we used to call Hangman tree, we had a Hangman tree in Calabases I guess their was a lot of trees as you go up, but this huge oak tree was their and the authorities sort of camped under

their so that any body who didn't lived in the canyon was not allowed up in the canyon. They let my father though every evening or each two or three days, you know when you come home.
It was very server, that white got a lot of the cattle, I can remember I don't think I was pumped to see it at all. It put an impression me we drove by the ranch one day, and they had a big long strip. They had the cow right under the machines. "Machine Guns". They had to kill them, there was any cure for them, I guess.

They had to prevent from any other spreading !

Oh yes, it was all over California open-mouth disease. So as we came from our place in Topanga, Topanga Summit, and we sat there looked over the valley most of it was Alfalfa field and Poppy field. The one thing that stood out was The Greek Theater of Owensmouth High School. I don't know what Owensmouth High School is still, but I went there in 1929-30. I went there for two years. They had this beautiful Greek Theater, and 3 years before when my sister had started there, I don't know if she was there a year, but it was almost at graduation time and the Greek Theater, I had been there to play some things. I remember it was built with a lovely columns and rooms on either side, where the Greek Theater were the sewing classes were or the economic classes. One of them burned down unfortunately it was about 4 days before Graduation. The girls needed clothes and graduation dresses burn and it was just some big event. I don't know how ever did it start or anything, but I remember hearing about it. Of course we had to rebuild it in 1930's, but we had a lot of fund raisers because of that. I noticed in this 1930 utopia, that was the name of their year. Here are some pictures of the Greek Theater, the memories of the father.

Now is it just the Greek Theater that burned or the hole high school?

That I am not sure, I do remember it was the Greek Theater, but I don't remember all the rest.

Now we will go back to the Fret Station in Owensmouth. If you proceeded the west of Sherman Way, I wish I can remember the name of the department store. There was a great big department store, it was huge, it was two stories high. This was big !

"In those days it was than."

"Sure" and it was so fun to go in there, it funny as a personal thing I remember so well, We went in there and my mother bought me a brown sweater for school. Then we went next door and there was a beautiful bakery by the name of Lagerdorther a family name I believe and I thought in later years that maybe a sort of Lagerdorth baker, but I found out no they started in San Francisco, but the name was so much the same. They had donuts apparently a sugar donut. I can remember when I about 4 or 5 I

had this brown sweater, and I was so proud of it and I ate the sugar donut, and I said," Oh shoot" I had the sugar all over me. They use to make Raisin pie, you can smell them all over town. That was the day you went up to the drug store, which was on the opposite side of the street down to Dr. Duyon, there was a certain odor that you once in a great while find in a drug store in a little town. You never find in a store, you know what I am talking about.

Sort of the odor of the drugs.

A grocery store odor and a odor has a lot to do with memory. We use to sit on this marble top counter, and they had the soda fountains, and that went (ssssssh). We get a mug of Root Beer for a nickel. Oh this was a big treat. The mugs of course it was a foot high and would be at 10 inches round, it wasn't little. The cherry frost fret was great. That was really something!

I discover that many students today never heard of the cherry frost fret.

No, What's that, Oh and one thing when I was at Owensmouth High school 29, or 30. I did not belong this, I use to play the drums. I don't know how I ever got to that, I think I was in love with some guy in the orchestra. Someone gave me a drum, I didn't know you had to practice notes for the drum. (what did that fool mean). Anyway I remember going down Sherman Way on a windy day, and we had some horses in parade and they were in front of us. A kind of erratic marching. They went down Sherman Way and the room would stick to the base band, and we had to avoid the horses in front of us.

I understand bands do hate to march just behind the horses.

I can see why. Than they instigated an on high of girls drumming though the court, the only one left to the rockies. I believed it was 19, and it was green, white uniforms. I didn't belong to this society side. They were entered in the Passenda Torment Roses as a basket of peaches, but unfortunately they didn't win any thing, because they didn't have one single rose on the float. Had they had, they probably would of come off of some prize, because it was very unusual, because it was the only one that side of the rockies. I don't know if they still have it or not.

Oh, another thing that used to happened in high school. Now we talk about the smog and so forth on much more industrial, on cars and things, but then Orange Grove and crops from the Valley were regulated by smudge pots. When it got cold you see the kids in class all sitting half asleep, because they been up all the night making smudge pots. Then there would be this dark fog, I guess you call it smug in the valley, but no one ever said anything about it.

Can you describe what a smudge pot was, for the benefit of those who haven't heard of one and how it worked ?

Well I'm not real sure, but I think there with crude oil or something and they had to be lite every two feet between the trees, the orange trees and that would make smoke and it make warm the air. I think that's what it is. Some would burn the entire tree.

Would this soil the houses despite of smoke ?

I don't know, I don't think they did. I know I don't think they did

I'm just wondering if it been actually much more of a newcince of a small view than our time of their were actually smudges ?

Probably that's the only way they can keep their crops. At the time nobody thought of woman shoes or things.

I understand it , it was only necessary to raise the temperature in the orchard just a few decrees to accomplish it.

Yea at 32 not for long. To keep the air moving. That's all we needed I guess. The smoke of the old tires or crude oil whatever to burn, because it was cheap to do and raised the temperature.

Oh and I know there was something else I wanted to tell you about the Branch Ranch. Quite some time ago I was looking though a lot of papers, and so forth I found something that my mother had written. It was very interesting, I believe that the year was 1927 or 29. She was asked to move the people over Glenndale for a very special job. What it was she did was execute this job, was to climb up the ladder and paint the coat of arms on the door of Brant's airplane. It was one of the first planes privately owned. Now who was it ? Was it Miss Cetit said who owned the plane. Yes. I don't I can't think what year about or been. This was 1927 or 29. It was one of the first privately owned, so she put on the gold and made all the coat of arm branch over the hanger Glenndale and I just can't believe that.

I saw my first movie, one of the first, when I was about 4 or 5 years old in the laundry in Owensmouth.

In the laundry ! How did that happen ?

They put up folding chairs and they hung the sheet up on the wall and somebody had a projector show was "The Covered Wagon and the Lady". They moved in a piano from some place in the laundry. She played songs. I remember June Braizer with a beer can on his head, and he thought it was a funny thing. Somebody shot it and

the beer prickled down to his tongue. The wind came up a little, so it was kind of wavy going back and forth.

Another big thing that happened was the first earthquake that I can remember ever feeling was I think in 24 I don't know it was the Santa Barbara earthquake. Was that in 24 or 23 ? The Santa Barbara was in 27. So up in Topanga in the Summit that mountain was all shale which was every moveable the roads cut though the shale. We went up to see what devastation it done. Of course they had to close the road. It was probably 300 feet of mountains. What amazed us was the eucalyptus trees, which I suppose have depose I'm not sure, they stood up all the way down they just sailed right down to the bottom of the canyon river and I don't know how long that was before they had that road open.

Then you were asking I believe about grammar school ?

I went to Topanga grammar school and I never got to find out exactly when it was started. There had been people their before my father got there. Not too many, Not too many. At any rate If their were more about 25 pulps from 1 to 8th grades were an average that was, really, really good. Mark Capol was the county supervisor, you know Mark Capol High School. He come once a year, and I can always remember when we were all good and he show off had spelling B's and all that sort of thing. So we went to that little red school house. Me and my sister walked down this hill that was a half an mile. It was amazing to me now that I look back that how one teacher handle kids 6 years old to 18 because some of them were in the eight grade, probably 16 because the boys liked girls, and a lot of them didn't go to high school in those days. That's when I was little and graduated finally in, then people went on a little to high school later on. When one went to college that was put up a bug on a pin. That was really something. I think we had a marvelous education, I really do. I just think it was really around the three R's. I can't think of any terrible disciplinary problems that the teacher had, maybe I didn't know about them. We knew all these kids, we knew all there families you know. We use to have terrific entertainment. I always thought it was to bad now. I know my grandchild go to school now the city school and children can't express their eventually, they don't have enough time for plays and all this and that. If they do it's got to, now and days it's got to have athenic something or other with it. We're studying Mexico or studying Ucispia or some place or other. We used to get legends of sleeping hollow. Oh lord I was everything from a turn- up to a christmas bell to Barbara Preache. You used your imagination, of course my mother used to make costumes out of her lap and didn't realize this so. My sister and I use to put the weeds in place we were just born with it from my mother. So it was just a terrific thing. When I graduated there were two other people. Their were three graduates of us. I don't know where they are. Wholestead, Alexander, and my self, and we thought we were something.

You remember Christmas, what sort of things you do in elementary school ?

Oh yes, well my father legated to get a tree. Now we never had a the kind of trees that we have here fur tree. He would be asked to get a tree off the property, so he get a big mansnewa tree. At christmas a mansnewa tree had little white bells flowers on them. They get this and take it to the school house, they hall it on the stage which was six inches high at one end of the room. The tree was there and a cross from their was a franklin stove. Which we had to have that or it would freeze. So than they would give terminus plays. I remember when I was 3 or 4 we panamine the night before christmas while one of the big kids scavenge. We had folding chairs for our beds, of course when we laid on it, it folded right up in it. That was real cause for joy. Than we had presents, and Santa Clause would come in, and of course we all knew it was the milk man, but that didn't make any difference. It was just a marvelous warm feeling. Than we used to have dances. My mother was in it a great deal. The last time I can remember my mother dancing, an adult dancing with a child, when I was about 5 years old, and it was with the school entertainment.

How about Halloween ?

I can't think how much we did Halloween, because you don't trick or treat in the canyon. You have to walk 5 miles to the nearest house practically.

Easter was pretty good, but there's so many ranch kids, I mean wait a minute an Easter Rabbit laid eggs I never heard of a rabbit. With 2 or 3 year old you can put that over. However I am sure we meet once in a while. I'll tell you when Easter came. When a church was started in Topanga, my mother was kind of an instigator bachelor at a Christian Science Church. She had a Mrs. Willis in Santa Monica that came up to Topanga Canyon. Mrs. Willis was a Christian Science. My mother always been, well she wasn't exactly a Christian Science, but if she was looking right now, she be Science and Mind Community Church that type of thing and so forth. So they started a Christian Science Church. A lot of people went to church then. So they use to make Easter Baskets, but they fixed them out of coffee cans, and they decorated them all.

We did real big on Abraham Lincoln's Birthday and George Washington's I can't think we ever had a holiday, but those two. They may or that they did.

You may had more exurbance by not having a holiday and doing something in school instead.

All I remember when people brought cherries. cherry trees, and people brought cherry blossoms, and a big deal about the whole thing. Then we had an opportunity to perform by ourselves,

that was the big advantage about that little school. I remember the first time I ever appeared in public myself. It was a recipe on how to make a cat. You take a pound of flyaroud, and you mix

it with fat, stir in with per, put in some fur, and you have a pussy cat. I brought down to house I was bored. I said," If I ever made it I guess I have to go back to that telling that." So if see entertainment if it rained than forget it, I mean on top of the mountain. You know every once in a while you missed things. You walked down and walked home from these things. Once in awhile when I was 8 or 9 we ride a horse to school, we had a couple of horses. That was kind of fun, cause you can show off with some of the bigger boys who had horses for school. So we race back across the school yard. That little Topanga creek that you can hardly see now. I have seen it when I was a child when it was 25 feet across and 6 or 8 feet deep. I remember I could see my father ride the horse swim across from one side to the other. I guess they had some pretty bad floods at that time. I remember something about the valley was flooded I think in 1912. It got a lot of the olive groves. Not just Owensmouth, but out further. Then of course in 31, they had a terrible flood, that was devastated the land along that is now the Los Angles River where it contained in its cement banks.

I know they had a bad one in 38.

In '38, March of '38, then we had one on New Years time in '32. I think we were out in Whitter. I remember what it did, it through a goalie up their near Lincoln Park in Los Angeles, Where there was a big dance, people were celebrating, and it all came down and wiped the hole thing out. For instance here in Tonga on Ventura in later years I found out I knew people who lived there Business and homes right around that area, it just took them all out. It took part of Ventura Blvd. right out to. It would have this last rain that we had if it hadn't been contained. Because the water came over of Laurel Cyn. and at Will Park. It came over the banks of the Los Angeles River.

I think I saw something in the paper about that a picture. I was amazed on how high the water was over the bridge.

My daughter came over from Whitter that day and it took her 2 hours to get over. It only takes her about a half an hour. The Hollywood freeways were closed and than the parking lot had fallen with three inches. They detoured her around, when she got to Tujanga and Ventura she said," She thought that bridge was going to go." It was right up under it.

I know the paper publish the picture of that I can hardly believe it when I saw it water just practically at the bottom of that bridge. I wonder, did it go out?

I've talk about Dr. Dunyon's home. I had a Dr. Dunyon once, but he sowed my head up. Well you talk about my school days, I

they did then was they pushed me out of the willows and I think we were having classes out side and someone was chasing me anyway. I ran and the teacher picked me up, and one of the big boys took a red bandanna handkerchief, he put on my head. The red bandanna handkerchief die would come out, I said,"yuk". So she got in a little car and drove me to Ownesmouth where my father was making signs for the Hammer and Lumber Co. He came out with his paint and brushes, What he said was, "What the hell did you do now." He took me to Dr. Duyons, and I was laid out on the table. He didn't put me out. He just gave me something. I swear 'til this day He must of used garnia, because this was when I was 9 or 10. It was alright because I got a lot of attention at graduation time. Of course my mother was the only one who went crazy on top of the mountain when it happen to us. I didn't get home until I came with my father.

I wanted to ask you about the Forth of July. How was that celebrated ? Since you mention the other holidays.

Well we used to celebrate it, at one time when I was a kid, on the ranch that we had ice cream, but the only thing that there was no refrigeration at any time. So what happen on the Forth of July was my father would go down to the Topanga Post Office. The post office and general store would order more ice than what was really usually. I guess that people had ice boxes, but they weren't that good. He got a couple big box of ice and he come back it. This would take an hour or so. He go down with the horse and get back. Then he'd grind it in the old fashion grinder. Just my sister and I, my aunt and my mother you would have to make a whole freezer full then you had to eat the whole thing, because you didn't have any where to put it. Then we probably had to blow up a paper bag to save from cold. That was about it.

I'm thinking many of young people have never seen one of the old fashion ice cream freezers. Can you explain a little bit how it worked ?

It was a wooden bucket. It was all built for a purpose, a wooden bucket with very slightly slanted inside. Now inside that was a little rachet in the middle of the bottom of the bucket over a canister of steel like stainless steel that had a tight fitting rib. The thing that made it tight fitting was the handle of the ice cream freezer, then attached to one edge of the bucket, came across and holds the top down to the other edge and had a handle on it. Now you put your ice cream inside there, Oh yes a dasher was inside there, you put all the ice cream mixture in, than you put ice and rock salt in quantities all around the canister and the bucket. You ground it and ground, ground, ground as you keep putting in ice and salt and things like that. We have one right now that work exactly the same way only its run on electricity. It looks the same, but run on electricity. At the time you got to it, everybody whack and you felt eating all the ice cream in the world.

Another big event that happened, now I think this happened in 1924. I am not sure, but I can remember hearing it on the radio. Osa and Martin Johnson , you know the African explorers. Where on there way to Los Angeles, in a private plane that had crashed in the Sana Susana mountains from the east hills. She last a long time. Those were very permitted planes. They were flying low and I don't know what happened, but any way the plane went down. I remember as a child it was so romantic. IT was about she held in her arms, and I think she died there . I thought at the time, we were better readers at home. Isn't this to bad? I mean why couldn't been something real something in Africa. Not out in the Sana Susana mountains.

Than I can remember, I don't know exactly what portion of the valley running maid was in . Has anybody mention running a farm ?

Yes ! They haven't mention a running maid. In reading I came across the name. I think its somewhere in the far western part of the valley, and probably in the southern, southwestern part rather than the northwestern. Is that your understanding ?

No. I think I remember it being as say between Owensmouth, Reseda and Van Nuys, or it be in the boundox kind of between Reseda to back over here. I remember seeing these little houses. The idea as I recall somebody had a plan, you sold a person or a customer a plot of land and you also gave them (Of course you charge them for the land to begin with) you gave them a flock of chickens that they had business for yourself. I think the idea was if that you get so many people in business for themselves that the same thing the market goes down. Now I think that was it. They were going to grantee that you sell them if you raised them and of course a lot of people did that.

Now I noticed that you had a question, like regarding the Depression ?

Well what I did was leave high school after 2 years and I to work. It seems to me as monitory things, when I looked back I think we always lived in the Depression and didn't know it. My own family in a sense, you know. So I didn't spend any of the Depression years in Topanga or in... Well we got married in 33. So the Depression 29 to 33.

Of course it was fast !

Yea right and I was living in Santa Monica and Venice at the time. So that part did not affect me as far as the valley went .

Most people that we had interviewed in the valley had stated that, they didn't think that this valley was hard then many other of the places. In fact it was agucrultural for one thing, and people raised a lot of their own food you didn't get bread lines

or anything like that of the sort.

No of course there was a lot of, I don't think it affect any the valley this way, but that's when they were raising there own food (You weren't supposed to give it to any of your neighbors) sell the access, because that would take the economy and they wanted.... So they buried a lot of it. I mean people who held the letter of the law, didn't fell that they could share or they didn't fell they can sell there access, because you had to keep the economy up which was alright unless you were taking to somebody who was very hungry. Then it gets kind of crazy.

Oh ! This was interest you hear about the minorities and the minorities rights at the present time if its ever been a problem or sort a friction in the valley. I don't know because when I went to grammar school we always had mexicans, mexican people, fine mexican families I held a grammar school reunion, myself and two Levet West who was the daughter of the store keeper at the Topanga general store. We decide to have a grammar school reunion. Would you believe it 28 people including ourselves. There were one or two men who not married, couple of girls who were widows, one of the couples Fred and Betty Venomen. The Venomen has lived in the canyon for years I found the school with all the kids. He made the team Fire Captain in Topanga. They live in Canoga Park and he is retired. Betty Philosophy I started first grade with Betty Philosophy and Fred Venomen married they were here. It was just so enjoyable. We had my sixth grade teacher who I still write to her, she lives in Corcin. By the way I just herd the other day and had lunch not to long ago Elva Seaqest who was my sister first school teacher in Topanga school. At the moment I herd about her because she is in the hospital with broken hip. She'll be out. I'm telling you she has big has a hair pin and fly as twice as liable . She's 83 and lives in Pacific Palasades and teaches at where ever her child goes.

She still teaching at 83 ?

Oh yea she a widow and she just a living doll. I was surprise at so many people came. You haven't seen them for 45 years. Among them was the Cortez, Orvondal Cortez, Alberto Cortez, Gilbert or Von which ever you want it, his sister Mary. All these people we never thought anything about there Mexican or Caucasian. We never thought anything about it. The only thing I thought about was the person or the spanish that I took in High School and never did get any place. Of course I was a terrible, terrible student. Oh somebody said if I wanted to go on to college to get my degree to get grades, I said oh my God I'd go back to first grade. Of course you never stop learning just because you quit school. It be foolish if you did. Anyway I remember being in a play...one play in high school of the three bears and I was Ocitos. All I said was Oyi off stage, I don't know why I was saying it for. But anyway what they were teaching us was in the six months (I just took a semester) was Castsalian Spanish. So me with my book, I'd go and talk to some of these

fellas that men and women I've known for years.

My parents and friends did a lot of talk about them.

I can't remember we had a Chinese boy ? We had a Chinese boy and I can't think of his name right now. He was there for years. He was the son of cook and caretaker of the biggest state of the canyon, but it was owned by Fred Sullen. He started a penny dance. He was the biggest state. Every year he used to give a big party for the Los Angeles orphanist. I don't know what or where it was. He went back to China, this young boy went he was my age I don't know, Heavens I can't figure out when he went back to China.

That's the only minority that I can remember. I can't think we had any black people at the time.

They came in the Valley later I think.

I can remember when I was four, and I was visiting friends with my mother in Los Angeles at a place called Echo Park. Has I look back now I didn't think of them as being black people then. There was a lovely family who lived next door to Louise and Menard. They had a little boy my age 4 we use to play in the sand and we dig and never thought anything about it. My mother never thought anything about it. But Mrs Bernard here I couldn't believe it. It was ridicules. My mother got so mad she left and don't even talk to her again. She said it was the craziest thing she ever heard. My mother was very forward. Very prethinking she thought it was crazy, that's where it has to start. I think right now it just started down here. You can't start it up in high school to end your grade. It's going to be interesting see... I'm just glad I don't need a masters at this age. Because its too bad. You think they can get any further with the same grades you got.

I don't know? How would you feel in regards of busing. Then if you had the small children? You wouldn't object to it then.

I would object to busing, Not because there was going to be colored kids or black people or green or white or anything. I think its a waste of time, money, and energy to put people on buses, busing clear over here. Just in hours waste all that study time everything on the bus. The reason I say I think that it.. have a head start program. It was down here and, it worked that little children don't care what colored people are. I don't think and young mothers are always more liable. Now the parents I met when they had some questions over at Clover Jr. High. Those people from Berendo High School. I was talking to the Vice Principle Dr. Hunder. I said," how about if they were Mexican College". He said," and these were terrific kids" and their parents would come from there out here for the P.T.A meetings.

They would come out here and one of the little colored fellows said," What black people said," Oh its so good to be able to walk and stroll around. To go to school and not prerime. Because they put up down you know. Mr. Hunder used to take them back and forth. I don't think you can force somebody to like somebody else. I just don't think so! I don't know the answer to it. But if I had a child who was going to be bused they have to put me in jail before they had to be bused. The crazy part wouldn't be because someone was black, it would be because the crazy non sense spending all this money and always saying, oh we can't to do this we have to make our music program at this school or gymnasium program, we don't have the money. That ridiculous ! When Jeff was at walesury... and kids are kids they do that way at there school or they do that way here. They were a little tough. Jeff's friend who was very social minded, all colored kids were sitting over here and John said," Now this is a cal-technological in the Valley". He went over and said'" How are you guy doing or something you know, than said get lost. They never had a thing, they never... What I mean is down here little ones you can make so maybe they can go on up. But I don't know how there going to do it. I just don't know how they are going to do it. There's more simulation between black and white. It's not that they're equal but it's just that there's no mixture. I talked to a number of... I used be a PTA president over here in Vista in 1969. There were some colored people over there. They were just sort of starting. The colored people didn't mind. They didn't want it. Their children went to the other side they bought home ground here.

My husband says when someone's Japanese, colored person, us and new people that will be fine. That will be a mixing pot. I have no objection to that. Maybe they would.

Later on will be glad to find out what the attitudes were.

Here the point of it is in the south, and I read a lot about it because of the PTA president because there was buses to start out. In the south there schools were terrible as compared to the white. You just didn't have any thing going for them. But go down to Compers Jr. High School and I would say it's just as good classroom as any Valley College has to offer. I mean it's not that they haven't got good schools. It isn't the inner city got good schools, in the first place a lot of the teachers wont go down there. Because there afraid they will be chopped in half. So if they provide equal schools that is at least one step, which I'm all for. They're a number of grammar schools that I joined that period, because while it was a tiny position you might say in the national PTA if I get my teeth into something I think you would research it and do the best you can, you know. Kind of know what you are talking about. Which I knew too much at the time, but at least I visited these different places to see for myself. So it wasn't that we were offering any interior education. That would be about it on that.

You feel that there hasn't been any real racial discrimination here in this Valley?

Not that I know of. I don't know maybe there was. Of course now in days. When I was most involved 68 or 69 going into concil and state meetings and things. It was just sort of starting I mean what were we going to do, that type of thing. I didn't run to any myself.

You have been listening to an interview with Mrs. Roth Thom of

11436 Valley Spring Lane
Studio City, Ca 91604
March 19, 1978

The interview was conducted by James L Dodson and by Miss. Lily Amila Ferretti